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lins manufactory, the fortunes of which we shall trace in another article.

Three of the illustrations given herewith represent good specimens of Italian and French tapestry. The gradual progress of the art is well marked, from the set pattern shown in the Italian work, through the conventional and somewhat grotesque design of the Fontainebleau school, to the finished reproduction of a picture by Boucher in the tapestry of the Louis Quinze period. The fourth illustration shows the marks of a number of leading manufacturers.

FASHIONABLE STAIRCASE DECORATIONS.

LANDINGS, staircases, and walls are now made a great feature for decoration in fashionable houses, both large and small. When a landing permits of it, it is arranged as an anteroom, carpeted and covered with skins or rugs, with settees or low-cushioned seats; a mirror from floor to ceiling is often introduced, with curtains on either side. The base is protected with a tray or basket, for flowers or ferns, or pretty wicker or basket work, china or terra-cotta, or painted tiles; baskets or trays of wire-work, or cork-work imitative of rockery, are considered common, and therefore not seen in fashionable houses. So says The London Queen, an authority on such subjects. To the same newspaper we are indebted for the following suggestions:

Brackets of oak, or covered with velvet, for china jars or bronzes, are fixed in the corners or on the walls, and anything quaint in the way of shields, daggers, poniards, swords, etc. Water-color drawings are not hung on these landings or staircase walls, as they have too modern an appearance for the fancy of the day, but oil-paintings and valuable engravings are, on the contrary, in great request; but the almost universal decorations are china plates hung at intervals on the walls of landings, staircase, and hall. As regards the aspect of walls themselves, all that is spurious and not genuine is discountenanced, and this is the prevailing idea with respect to all decorations and all adornments of rooms. Imitation is discarded in favor of the real, whatever that real may be, and the result is naturally a purer and more refined style. The walls are not papered or varnished to imitate marble, but are painted a whole color, or, oftener than not, the upper part of the walls is painted, say, a pale cinnamon shade, with a dado of dark chocolate, with an arabesque border of chocolate painted on a cinnamon ground, dividing the dado from the upper portion of the wall. Ladies with artistic tastes, and plenty of leisure for the occupation, can easily design and paint borders of this description, according to individual fancy. Oak panels and wood carvings are much appreciated for staircase and wall decorations; but to indulge in them requires a long purse, and some little patience, if a series or set of oak panels is desired. Covering the walls with oriental fabrics is another fashion of the hour. This also runs into money and material. Tapestry is the delight of its owner, and in some few unique houses the entrance-halls are hung with tapestry; but this is rather a rare adornment for a hall, although it is to be seen in some well-known houses in the metropolis. It was formerly the fashion to have narrow stair-carpet in the centre of the staircase, and to display a foot or a foot and a half of white on either side of the carpet. The idea now is to cover the stairs completely from wall to balustrade, and the less of border shown on this wide carpeting, the better the style. Where the saving expense is an object, crimson or claret felt, with an under carpet, has not a bad appearance. In houses that can boast of oak staircases, the stair carpet is of the narrowest, scarcely more than a foot in width, the polished oak stairs being thus displayed. In bijou houses in fashionable localities, where the rents are as high as the houses are small, the owners have recourse to every plan and expedient to render them more commodious and less ugly. To gain additional space, and to improve the appearance of these very narrow staircases, the wooden bannister-rails are removed, and are replaced by open iron balustrades, the lower part of which is level with each stair, some four to six inches, according to the width to be gained. This arrangement considerably widens the staircase and very much en-

hances the appearance. To turn from small houses to stately mansions, it is a favorite plan to place troughs for ivy and trailing plants at the foot of the staircase balustrades; these troughs are either of white china or painted pottery, and a trellis-work of wicker-work, either gilded or not, is fastened to the balustrade to form a support to the plants. It is only in houses having light staircases that this decoration is carried out, as on dark staircases the plants do not thrive and the effect is hardly noticed. The trellis-work and the inner troughs of tin are movable, so that there is no difficulty in watering the plants.

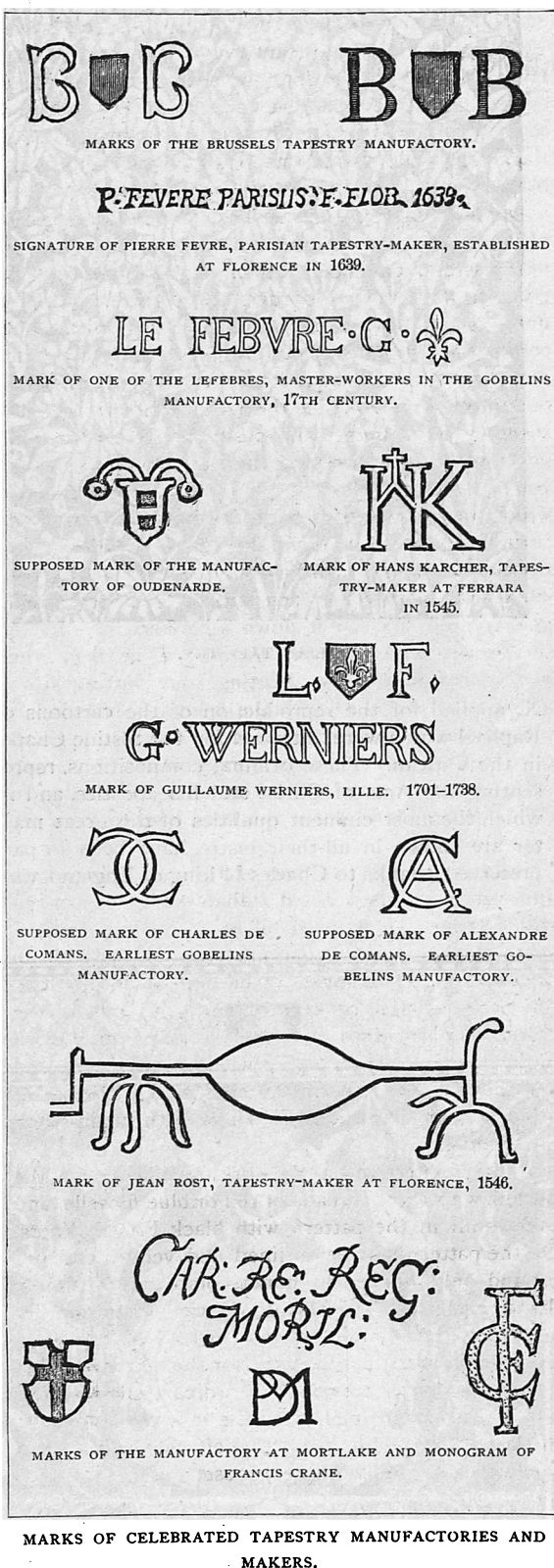
In many houses the small glass alcove at the head of the first landing, a mere apology for a conservatory, is now converted into a miniature boudoir, and

seen in these halls; cabinets and carved chairs stand in convenient spots; a writing-table, a folding screen, and other comforts are here arranged. In small houses, where it is possible to convert a small passage into a snug little hall by removing the partition which separates it from some small room adjoining, this is frequently done; but where nothing of the kind can be attempted, the few touches that can be added are given, such as plates and pictures on the walls, and curtains at the end of the so-called hall of some thick material.

STAMPED WALL LEATHER.

THE employment of stamped leather, or the admirable paper imitations that are made of it, like most of the prevailing fashions for interior decoration, is simply an old practice revived. In the middle ages embossed leather was not only used in the homes of the wealthy for adorning the walls of rooms, but also as carpets. This was looked on at first as a refinement of luxury. "Leathers for laying down in the rooms in the summer time," say the inventories of the Duke of Burgundy. In 1416, says M. Jacquemart, in his interesting "History of Furniture," Isabeau of Bavaria sent for "six leather carpets for the floor." This was one of the delicate devices of the German coquette, for although on several solemn occasions the floors had been covered not only with tapestries, but even with the most costly materials, the general practice, continued down to the period of the Valois kings, as shown in many paintings, was to strew the apartments with flowers and foliage. This custom was not discontinued till the time when the velvet-pile, or oriental carpets, began to be multiplied, and especially when the looms of the West succeeded in imitating them, the strewing of the floors gave place to the velvet fabric.

Returning to the fifteenth century, we find that in the same year, 1416, the Duc de Berry possessed a large piece of red leather decked with several escutcheons in gules, with three bends argent surrounding the shield of Castile. This was one of those highly-prized Spanish "Cordovans" which for a long time gave their name to the hangings known as "cordovan leather." At first the leather hangings were painted with some uniform pattern set off with designs, produced by the hot iron on the roller. Large pieces made of square skins sewn or glued together formed the principal portions of the hanging, which was completed by the means of narrower strips concealing the seams or joinings. As regards the colors, the imagination could conjure up no vision more brilliant than the reality. The ground was most commonly of silver or gold, this last effect being produced by means of a colored varnish laid over the silver. The arabesques and other ornaments vied in the brightness of their hues with this gorgeous ground. The inventory of Catherine de Médicis, published by M. Edmond Bonnaffé, gives some idea of the richness of these leathers at the close of the sixteenth century. Here are mentioned gold and silver hangings on an orange ground, with the queen's cipher; others with orange mountings, gilded or silvered on a violet ground; others again sea-green, with mountings similar to the preceding, or else red, with gold and dove-colored mountings, blue with gold, silver, and red mountings, not to speak of the multifarious mourning hangings, in which the background is relieved by silver alone. All the leather here described constituted movable hangings. But so early as the fifteenth century, leather of a different description had been introduced for fixed hangings. Thus the Marquis de Laborde quotes the following entry from the royal accounts of Charles VIII.: "1496. To Jehan Garnier, residing at Tours, the sum of four livres, fifteen sous tournois, granted to him for a large white ox-skin, delivered and consigned by him to a painter whom the king had sent for from Italy, whom the said lady (the queen) had ordered to make and paint the hangings of her bed." The learned author adds: "This description of work was introduced, or reintroduced, into France at the end of the fifteenth century by Italian painters, and was continued throughout the whole of the sixteenth century and the first years of the seventeenth century. The painting is raised on a gilded ground and keeps well." In the Cluny Museum is a series of paintings



gives a better appearance to a staircase than drooping plants deprived of light and air. These little retreats are now filled in with painted or figured glass, the tiny floor is carpeted, pretty small chairs are placed around, and a fancy table with a fancy cover in the centre, with a vase of cut flowers and ornaments of various descriptions in any available corner. The front halls of houses, whether they are stately vestibules or little better than narrow passages, are now furnished and decorated, instead of being unfurnished and undecorated; the cold-looking floor-cloth is replaced by a carpet, or the floor is tiled and covered with rugs or skins. Trophies of the chase are a favorite adornment for the walls; blue china jars and beakers, with perhaps a large palm in the centre, are